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JACKSONVILLE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS HONORED BY ATTORNEY GENERAL ALBERTO GONZALES FOR NATIONAL MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Attorney General Alberto Gonzales today commemorated National Missing Children's Day by honoring law enforcement and citizens nationwide for their unprecedented teamwork and selfless efforts in the recovery of missing and exploited children.

"A missing child is every parent's worst nightmare," said Attorney General Gonzales. "Every day, the courageous men and women of law enforcement work tirelessly to recover missing and exploited children across our nation. We are grateful for their dedication, and today we recognize their valiant efforts to apprehend would-be predators and keep our communities safe."

Attorney General Gonzales today honored two law enforcement officers with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office for their efforts to help missing and exploited children. Detective Kurt Jones and Detective Michael Boyner, were among 25 law enforcement officers honored at a Department of Justice ceremony today.

U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez stated, "I want to commend and thank Detectives Jones and Boyner for their hard work in this difficult investigation. The National Exploited Children's Law Enforcement Award is well deserved and I congratulate these fine detectives. We will continue to partner with local law enforcement as we battle this insidious crime against our loved ones."

In 2004, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, working with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service; Internal Revenue Service; U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey; and Jacksonville, Florida Sheriff's Office, launched Operation Falcon to investigate a child pornography enterprise. Operation Falcon seized computer servers from a company known as RegPay, which was suspected of advertising and distributing child pornography. Through careful research, cultivation of contacts, and diligent efforts, the task force painstakingly dismantled an enormous network of sexual predators. To date, officials have made more than 1,200 arrests internationally and 105 arrests in the United States.

Nearly 800,000 children are reported missing every year. Some children run away, others may be lost or injured, while some may be abducted by a parent or a stranger. For the more than 100 children abducted by strangers each year, where the child was kept overnight, held for ransom, or killed, the first few hours after an abduction are critical. Seventy-four percent of children who are abducted and later found murdered are killed in the first three hours after being taken.

Most often, child abductions are committed by family members—more than 200,000 annually—in an attempt to deprive a caretaker of custodial rights. Of the 58,200 non-family abductions each year in the United States, nearly all (98%) of these children were returned to their families safely.

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